

There is no centralized source of information about state level RN vacancy rates across the country that would allow us to compare North Carolina to neighbor states. However, several states have conducted research in the past year showing double-digit rates for RN vacancies: Maryland averaged 14.7% vacancy rates for full-time RN positions,⁸ Georgia reported an average vacancy rate of 13% for RNs,⁹ and Virginia had an average 13% of their hospital RN positions vacant.¹⁰ By comparison, North Carolina's average rate of 8.4% is relatively low.

Tables 18, 19 and 20 show how RN vacancy rates in hospitals vary by region and by the rural / urban location of the facilities. Rural / urban differences influence the regional variations since more hospitals in the Central region are located in urban counties, compared to hospitals in the Eastern or Western regions (see Table 2). However, in Tables 18, 19, and 21 through 24 a t-test of difference between average RN vacancy rates in rural and urban hospitals showed no statistically significant differences at an alpha level of 0.05.

Table 18. Hospital RN Vacancy Rates: Averages and Ranges by Regional Location

Region:	Average RN Vacancy Rate	Range	Number of Hospitals Reporting
Eastern NC	8.0	0 – 16%	29
Central NC	10.3	1 – 27%	33
Western NC	6.8	0 – 30%	33
Missing data			5
Statewide:	8.4		100

Table 19. RN Vacancy Rates for NC Hospitals by Region and Metropolitan Status

Regional Location	Average RN Vacancy Rates:			
	Rural Hospitals		Urban Hospitals	
	#	Rate	#	Rate
Eastern Region	17	7.5	12	8.6
Central Region	10	7.7	23	11.5
Western Region	18	6.4	15	7.4
Missing data	2		3	
Total	47	7.1	53	9.6

By contrast, Table 20 illustrates how differently rural and urban hospital RN vacancy rates behave when using the median cut-point of 8%. By dividing hospitals into 2 equal sized groups according to their RN vacancy rate, the differences between rural and urban hospitals are accentuated. Almost two-